JAMES L. GELVIN

THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

A HISTORY

FIFTH EDITION

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JAMES L. GELVIN
University of California, Los Angeles

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PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

When I signed up for this project in 2003, I never realized it would last for the rest of my life. But historians are storytellers, and as history progresses so does a historian's thinking, and so does the arc of the narrative of the story that the historian is telling. So every few years it is necessary to take stock and plunge in again.

Some things, however, never change. When I first began writing, I was determined to write a new type of general history, one that is more of an analytical essay than a simple chronicle, one that never loses sight of the global context in which regional developments unfold, one that examines the history of the Middle East through the same lens one might use to examine the history of any other region, and one that injects everyday language and humor into the storytelling. I hope that over the years I have gotten better and better at it.

Parts of this edition of *The Modern Middle East: A History* are based on work I have published elsewhere: "Drawing Boundaries (I)" draws from my "Obsession with Sykes-Picot Says More about What We Think of Arabs Than History," originally published on *The Conversation* website. Chapter 13 draws from my *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Introduction to Part IV and the vignette "Who Was Abdesslem Trimech?" draw from *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Chapter 18 draws from "Reassessing the Recent History of Political Islam in Light of the Arab Uprisings," in Fahed Al-Sumait et al. (eds.), *Conceptualizing the Arab Uprisings: Origins, Dynamics, and Trajectories* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014) and from my *The New Middle East: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). The Conclusion also draws from *The New Middle East*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every book is a group effort, mine no less than anyone else's. I would therefore like to use this space to thank those whose assistance has been invaluable to me in writing five editions of this book. First off, there are my former professors, particularly J. C. Hurewitz at Columbia and Zachary Lockman at Harvard, who showed me how it should be done. As the old saying goes, we stand on the shoulders of giants.

Over the years, others have given direct encouragement, argued, offered advice and solace, and pointed out missteps: Ziad Abu-Rish, Kaleb Herman Adney, Joel Beinin, David Dean Commins, Kate Elizabeth Creasey, Howard Eissenstat, Katherine E. Fleming, Kristen Hillaire Glasgow, Carol Hakim, Alma Heckman, Matthew S. Hopper, Emine Rezzan Karaman, Dina Rizk Khoury, Fred Lawson, Pauline Lewis, Ussama Makdisi, Karla Mallette, Sofia Mazgarova, Michael O'Sullivan, William B. Quandt, Chase Robinson, Lynn Robnett, Sarah Shields, and Zeynep Turkyilmaz. Special thanks go to William L. Cleveland, a true gentleman and friend who is now sadly gone; and to Teo Ruiz at UCLA and Helen Sader at the American University of Beirut, who provided me with the time and support necessary to write the first edition of this book. T. M. Rollins of the Teaching Company inspired me to begin this project many years ago; Bruce D. Borland took an early interest in the manuscript and sold Oxford University Press on the idea; and Peter Coveney, my initial editor at Oxford University Press, saw the first edition of this book through to publication, with the assistance of his committed staff. The torch has now been passed to Charles Cavaliere and *his* committed staff and my thanks go to them as well. Many of the photographs in this book came from the private collection of Wolf-Dieter Lemke of the Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft in Beirut and the Fondation Arabe pour l'image, also in Beirut. I am grateful to Sara Scalenghe for apprising me of the latter resource, and Tamara Sawiya for walking me through its extensive collection.

Finally, there are the students I taught at Harvard University; Boston College; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; the University of California, Los Angeles; and the American University of Beirut who, over the years, forced me to distill the narrative and rethink many of the issues raised in this book. It is to them that I dedicate it.

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

In this book I have tried to keep the number of foreign words—particularly words borrowed from Arabic, Persian, and Turkish—to a minimum. To a large degree I think I have succeeded, although, to paraphrase Sigmund Freud, sometimes a *timar* is just a *timar*. Although Arabic in particular contains sounds that do not exist in English (and vice versa), most words readers will confront should pose no problems in terms of pronunciation.

There are two sounds, however, that are represented in English by symbols that will appear strange to the average reader: the *hamza* (represented by ʼ or ') and the *ayn* (represented by ᶜ). The hamza designates what linguists call a glottal stop, the sort of sound one associates with Cockney English, as in "'allo, guvner!" Thus, when used in the middle of a word, it indicates a breaking off, then a resumption of sound. The *ayn* is a sound produced when the muscles of the throat are constricted as a vowel is pronounced. While it may be difficult for someone who does not speak Arabic to hear the difference between *ᶜajal* and *ajal*, for example, the absence of the *ayn* in the latter word alters its meaning significantly, transforming "hurrying" into "hesitating."

NEW TO THIS EDITION

- There are revisions to all chapters and introductions.
- Chapters 13, 16, 17, and 18 have been extensively revised.
- The Conclusion is entirely new.
- There are two new vignettes: "Drawing Boundaries (I)" and "The Land Where the Sun Sets."
- There are two new maps: "The Shrinking ISIS Caliphate" and "Saudi-Iranian Competition." There is one new photograph: "The Announcement of the Federal Democratic Rojava Social Contract."
- The "Suggested Readings" sections in Parts I, II, III, and IV have been revised and updated.
- The Timeline and Glossary have been revised and updated.

INTRODUCTION

On 17 December 2010, Muhammad Bouazizi, a produce vendor, set himself on fire in front of the local government building in Sidi Bouzid, a town in rural Tunisia. Earlier in the day, a policewoman had confiscated his wares and publicly humiliated him. He tried to complain to local government officials, but to no avail. He then went to the market, bought a flammable liquid, poured it over himself in front of the municipality building, and lit himself on fire with a lighter. He died eighteen days later.

The day following Bouazizi's desperate act, other vendors held a demonstration. They were soon joined by other residents of Sidi Bouzid from all walks of life. Government highhandedness and lack of responsiveness and accountability were central to the complaints of the protesters, but so were a host of other issues, ranging from unemployment to pervasive corruption. Onlookers recorded video clips of the protests and posted them on the Internet, and when the government shut Internet service down they sent them directly to *al-Jazeera*, the most popular satellite television broadcaster in the Arab world. Spurred on by images of rebellion, the protests spread throughout Tunisia, while Arabs elsewhere watched the growing cracks in the edifice of authoritarianism first with astonishment, then admiration. The Arab uprisings of 2010–2011 had begun.

Between January and March 2011, it seemed the entire Arab world was in revolt. Before the protests and uprisings were over, militaries would remove autocrats in Tunisia and Egypt, self-styled revolutionaries (*thuwwar*) would overthrow an entire regime in Libya (with the help of a NATO bombing campaign), and international pressure would force the leader of Yemen to step aside. In all, protests and uprisings broke out not only in those states, but in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Syria.

Perhaps the most memorable images associated with the early days of the uprisings came from Tahrir Square in Cairo, the epicenter of the Egyptian uprising, which protesters occupied for eighteen days before the army forced President Husni

Mubarak to step down. Those images, broadcast around the world, showed throngs of youths who had gathered in peaceful protest demanding not only that Mubarak resign, but human rights, democracy, and *karama* (dignity) as well. We know now that those images painted a selective and sanitized picture of what was really taking place on the streets of Egypt where, during those eighteen days, 850 Egyptians died, 6,000 were injured, 1,200 were "disappeared" by the army, and arsonists torched hundreds of buildings housing various offices of the regime they despised. Nevertheless, for a fleeting moment in post-9/11 America, Americans were not asking of Arabs and Muslims, "Why do they hate us?" but rather thinking, "They *are* us."

Then the bubble burst. First the uprisings in Libya and Yemen turned violent; then it was Syria's turn. Protests in Bahrain ended in bloodshed and fierce repression by the Bahraini government, with the help of troops and police from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Egypt passed from post-Mubarak military rule to rule by the Muslim Brotherhood then back to military rule whose human rights record makes Mubarak look almost saintly.

By the end of 2014, the image probably most closely associated with the uprisings was not of festive youths in Tahrir Square, but of fighters from a group called ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, also called the Islamic State), or the beheadings and crucifixions they performed, or the lines of refugees fleeing from their cruel and genocidal reign of terror in Syria and Iraq. And after more than a decade of war in Afghanistan, and after finally extricating itself from its self-inflicted wound in Iraq, the United States once again went to war in the region, this time to "degrade and destroy" the Islamic State. Three years after Bouazizi's self-immolation, the only uprising that still inspired cautious optimism was the original—that of Tunisia.

It was not just the Arab world that seemed so out of joint during this period. When a popular Islamist party won elections in Turkey in 2002, 2007, and 2011, it defied the prevailing wisdom that electing Islamists would mean "one man, one vote, one time." It also seemed to prove wrong all those who argued that Islam and democracy are incompatible. Then the popular prime minister ran for and won the position of president so that he might continue to play the role of puppet master despite term limits that prevented him from running for a fourth term as prime minister. Many Turks fear "creeping Islamization" of their society: veiling, previously banned, has returned to university campuses, and there are now restrictions on alcohol sales that might remind Americans of the "good old days" of America's blue laws. They also fear "creeping authoritarianism" from a man whose role model seems to be Russian president Vladimir Putin.

In Iran, the election of the moderate president Hassan Rouhani seemed to promise a new era after the bizarre antics of his predecessor. Yet the Iranian political system remains so opaque that it is difficult to know exactly where the power lies. Perhaps it lies with those who are merely seeking for Iran recognition as a regional power to be taken seriously—an Iran that might be interested in relaxing tensions with the West. Or perhaps it lies with hardliners who are hell-bent on going full steam ahead with the Iranian nuclear program and on adding fuel to the Yemeni and Iraqi fires.

For some social scientists and pundits, the current cataclysm through which the Middle East is going is only to be expected from a region they view as wracked by tribalism and a proclivity toward authoritarianism and violence, a region in which few states have borders that make any sense or are the natural outgrowth of popular will, a region in which ties of kinship and religious sect trump all other ties, a region that never fully progressed into the modern period. As one usually perceptive observer of the Arab and broader Middle Eastern worlds put it, "The jihadists of the Islamic State . . . did not emerge from nowhere. They climbed out of a rotting, empty hulk—what was left of a broken-down civilization."

As baseball player and pundit Yogi Berra once put it, "It's déjà vu all over again." In the wake of the 9/11 al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and some undisclosed target in Washington, DC (the attack was foiled mid-air), social scientists and the chattering classes tried to come up with an explanation for the "roots of Muslim rage," as one historian of the region put it. Many found the answer by conjuring up something they call an "Islamic civilization," whose main characteristic seems to be an implacable hatred toward the West and modernity.

Perhaps the most famous advocate of this position was Samuel P. Huntington, professor of government at Harvard University. According to Huntington, the world is divided into several distinct civilizations that are irreconcilable because they hold to entirely different value systems. Islamic civilization, Huntington asserted, is particularly dangerous because of its propensity for violence (Islam, in Huntington's words, has "bloody borders"). For Huntington and his disciples, the dramatic events of 11 September 2001 offered proof positive that Western and Islamic civilizations are doomed to engage in a fight to the death.

Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis found a wide audience in the aftermath of 9/11, and while Huntington's work does not quite have the cachet it once did, his thesis remains very much on the table, as the above-cited comment about the "rotting, empty hulk . . . of a broken-down civilization" makes clear. Nevertheless, the "civilizational critique" so favored by Huntington and his imitators is open to criticism on several grounds.

First, Huntington and others fail to take into account the diversity of the Islamic world. There are, after all, numerous ways Muslims practice their Islam, and there are numerous cultures with which Islam has interacted. Furthermore, "cultures" or "civilizations" are not billiard balls that bounce off each other when they come into contact. Throughout history, what we think of as discrete "cultures" have borrowed from and influenced each other. During the Middle Ages, for example, Arab philosophers kept alive ancient Greek texts that later provided the foundation for the European Renaissance. Interactions such as this make one despair of ever drawing distinct boundaries for any "culture" or "civilization"—which is why many scholars have abandoned those concepts entirely.

Finally, the notion of a "clash of civilizations" is ahistorical. For Huntington and his disciples, the values of Islamic civilization are unchanging and are spelled out in the foundational texts of Islam (such as the Qur'an). But why are we to assume that the meaning and social function of Islam have not changed over

time as circumstances have changed? Why are we to assume that a Muslim of the twenty-first century would approach those foundational texts in the same way as a Muslim of the seventh century? And, come to think of it, why should we associate the problems of the Middle East with Islam or some innate cultural "flaw" at all? What about the fact that throughout modern history the Middle East has served as ground zero for proxy wars launched by foreign powers, or that the Middle East has been cursed by oil, which has had the effect of distorting economic, social, and political life throughout the region?

If we re-shift our focus away from the so-called failings of the region and instead return to the immediate aftermath of Bouazizi's self-immolation, we are left with one indisputable fact: During 2010–2011—and, as we shall see, during the decades before then—millions of Middle Easterners from Morocco to Iran have gone out onto the street demanding the same human and democratic rights and social and economic justice enjoyed by so many others throughout the world. They did this knowing they faced the full wrath of the regimes that oppressed them. And while some states broke down, leaving chaos in their wake, and autocrats held onto power or returned to power in others, those aspirations remain.

In Libya, for example, where violence continued long after the overthrow of the regime and an American ambassador died during an attack on the American consulate in the city of Benghazi, tens of thousands marched to protest the attack, ransacked the headquarters of the group that did it, and drove those responsible out of town. In November 2013, twenty-one Egyptian women, including seven under the age of eighteen, who called themselves the "7 a.m. Movement" after the time of their protest against the military government, defied the government's ban on all demonstrations. Even though their protest was peaceful, they were convicted of belonging to a terrorist group and sabotage and received prison sentences of eleven years each—as they probably anticipated. And in the midst of the civil war and Islamic State-induced carnage in Syria, Syrians in more than seventy towns and cities continued holding peaceful vigils and demonstrations demanding the end of a regime whose brutality toward its own citizens knew no bounds. There is, in other words, more than one way to view contemporary events in the region.

The argument of this book is twofold: first, the only way to understand these contemporary events is to understand the history of the region that is the focus of so much attention. Specifically, this book argues that recent events cannot be understood unless one understands the social, economic, cultural, and political evolution of the Middle East, particularly during the modern period—the period that began in the eighteenth century but has roots that stretch back as far as the sixteenth. Second, this book contends that the Middle East does not stand outside global history, that the social, economic, cultural, and political evolution of the region parallels (but does not necessarily duplicate) developments in other regions of the world, and that therefore events in the Middle East cannot fully be understood unless placed within their international context. To put it another way, historians specializing in the Middle East certainly have a story to tell, but it is a global story told in a local vernacular. It is to that story that we now turn.

PART I

The Advent of the Modern Age

This book is about the *modern* Middle East. Its underlying argument is that the eighteenth century marked a new phase in the evolution of world history. Two important characteristics distinguish modern history: a world economy unlike any that had existed before and a world system of nation-states. On the one hand, the modern period marks the emergence of an integrated world market, binding together nations in a global division of labor. On the other hand, during the modern period a new form of political association—the nation-state—appears on the world stage for the first time, spreads, and achieves primacy worldwide. These twin systems have affected economic, social, cultural, and political life everywhere in ways that were unprecedented in world history.

Neither the world economy nor the world system of nation-states appeared overnight. Both needed an incubation period, during which they could be refined and expand throughout the globe. This incubation period took place during an era called by historians the "early modern" period, which lasted from about the beginning of the sixteenth century through the first half of the eighteenth century. Thus, to understand the modern history of the Middle East or any other region, it is necessary first to understand its roots in the early modern period.

Three events occurred in the first decades of the sixteenth century that would redefine the Middle East forever. Only one of these events actually occurred in the Middle East. The other two occurred far away from the Middle East, but would define the global environment in which the Middle East would evolve.

The first event that took place at the dawn of the early modern period was the emergence of large-scale, long-lived empires in the Middle East and beyond. Three such empires emerged during this period. The largest and longest-lived of these great empires was the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire survived for more than four centuries until it was finally dismantled at the end of World War I in 1918. The Ottoman Empire thus provides us with a direct link from the early modern period through the modern period.

At its height, the Ottoman Empire governed a huge expanse of territory, not only in the Middle East, but in North Africa and southeastern Europe—Greece, Hungary, the Balkans, Romania, Bulgaria—as well. Indeed, there is reason for the famous quip by the nineteenth-century Austrian statesman Prince Klemens von Metternich that "Asia begins at the eastern gate of Vienna." The Ottomans, in fact, had laid siege to Vienna itself twice, the first time in 1529, the second in 1683. No wonder, then, that an English historian writing in the beginning of the seventeenth century called the Ottoman Empire "the present terror of the world."

The second empire to emerge at the beginning of the sixteenth century was the Safavid Empire. The Safavid Empire was centered in Persia but at its height included territories that stretched from the Caucasus Mountains in the north to eastern Iraq. The Safavid Empire lasted from 1501 to 1722, when it was overthrown by an invading army from Afghanistan. After a disastrous interregnum period, most noted for bringing Persia incessant war, depopulation, deurbanization, and intermittent famine, another Turkic dynasty took over from the Safavids. This was the Qajar dynasty, which ruled from 1796 to 1925. Although the Safavid dynasty itself lasted only half as long as the Ottoman Empire, its significance lies in its twofold legacy: the Safavid Empire established a state whose boundaries roughly coincided with the boundaries of present-day Iran and, under the Safavids, the population of Persia became adherents of the Shi^{c}i branch of Islam.

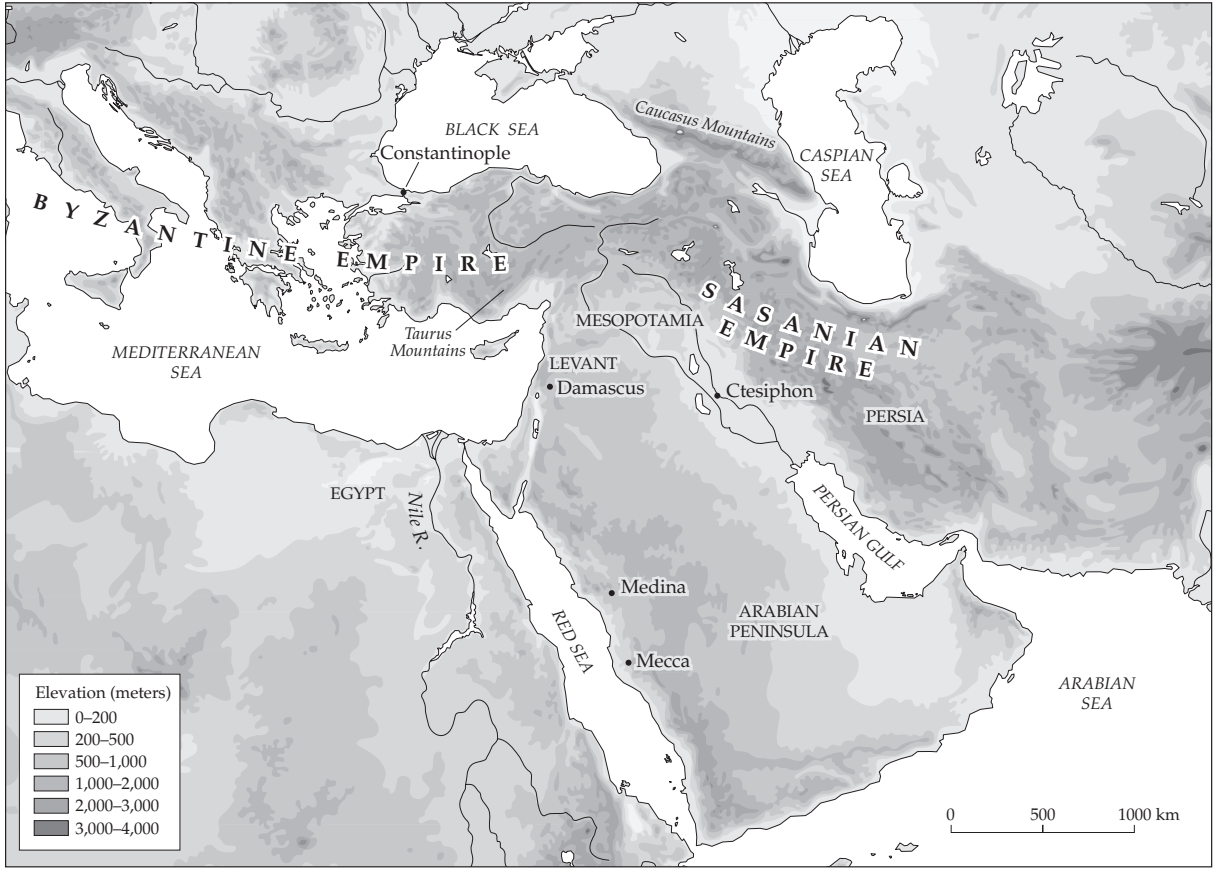
One other Muslim empire emerged during this period, which bears mentioning even though its history lies outside the scope of this book: the Mughal Empire of India. Founded in 1526, the Mughal Empire stretched, at its height, from Afghanistan in the north three-quarters of the way down the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal Empire ran afoul of British imperialism and, in 1858, was demolished by the British, who then made India into a British colony. The Mughal Empire resembled the Ottoman and Safavid empires in many ways: like the other empires, it was founded by a people from Central Asia (the first Mughal emperor, Babur, claimed descent from the half-Mongol, half-Turkish conqueror, Tamerlaine) and it shared political and economic structures and intellectual traditions with the Ottomans and Safavids. Unfortunately, the Mughal Empire lies outside the artificial boundaries we set for ourselves in writing the history of the modern Middle East. Its history is instead commonly addressed by historians who focus on another artificial geographical division, that of South Asia.

The second event that occurred at the dawn of the early modern period was the Commercial Revolution in Europe. During the early sixteenth century, trade among Europeans, on the one hand, and between Europe and other parts of the world, on the other, began to increase dramatically. A variety of factors encouraged the Commercial Revolution: technological breakthroughs, such as the use of the compass and adjustable sails and multiple masts on ships; new institutions for organizing trade and banking; the introduction of new crops—from tomatoes and potatoes to tobacco—from the New World; the introduction of massive quantities of New World gold and silver into Europe; and the

establishment of overseas colonies, from the Persian Gulf to the newly discovered Americas. According to many historians, the Commercial Revolution set off a chain of events that would culminate in the establishment of the modern world economy. The impact of the Commercial Revolution on the Middle East is the topic of Chapter 3.

The final event that took place at the dawn of the early modern era was the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation is commonly dated from 1517, when, according to legend, Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenburg Cathedral in present-day Germany. Luther's theses both protested various policies and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church and advocated new ones. The Protestant Reformation split Europe into separate Protestant and Catholic kingdoms and principalities, thereby ending the idea of a universal Christian state. It culminated in a series of religious wars during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Europe that emerged from these wars was very different from the Europe that entered them. As a result of the religious wars, Europe divided into highly competitive and sometimes highly efficient political units. European history became marked by attempts of these states to gain advantage or achieve a balance among themselves. In effect, then, modern nation-states and the nation-state system might be traced to the Protestant Reformation. The spread of the modern state system would have a profound effect on the Middle East.

Of course, the ways in which the three aforementioned events affected the Middle East were to a large extent determined by their interaction with existing social structures, economic arrangements, and cultural norms. Thus, to understand the impact of this period on the Middle East, we have to understand the legacy of the earlier history of the region. That is where Part I of this book begins.



The Middle East in Late Antiquity

CHAPTER 1

From Late Antiquity to the Dawn of a New Age

That which might be called the Islamic "core area"—the area of the first Islamic conquests—is the area that stretches from the Nile River in the west to the Oxus River in the east. The Islamic core area consists of five parts. First, there is the area called the Levant. The word Levant is derived from the French word *lever*, to rise, as the sun does in the east. Accordingly, the Levant is the area that stretches from the Mediterranean coast as far east as the Euphrates River—the eastern Arab world. In the north, the Levant extends to the Taurus Mountains in the Anatolian peninsula (the site of present-day Turkey); in the south, it extends to the northern border of the Arabian peninsula.

To the south of the Levant lie Egypt and the Arabian peninsula. To the east lie Mesopotamia and Iran. The name Mesopotamia is derived from the Greek words meaning "middle of the rivers," much as the word hippopotamus is derived from the Greek words meaning "river horse." The term Mesopotamia refers not only to the territory between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, but to the area immediately surrounding the two rivers as well. Iran is the name given to the territory that was once called Persia. In 1935, the shah (ruler) of Persia decreed that foreigners should use the word Iran, a word of ancient pedigree, when referring to his country. The story goes that the shah was so enamored of the racial theories popularized by Adolph Hitler that, at the suggestion of the Persian embassy in Berlin, he had the name Persia changed in diplomatic parlance to Iran to illustrate the "Aryan" roots of his nation. Needless to say, the name has stuck, and even the contemporary rulers of the country refer to their state as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

If you look closely at a map of the core area, you will see at the center a plain surrounded on all sides by mountains, deserts, and plateaus: to the north, in Anatolia, the Taurus Mountains; to the west, a range of mountains that divides the central plain from the coastal plain and the Mediterranean Sea; to the east, the Iranian plateau and the Zagros Mountains; and to the south, the Arabian

desert. The plain has been both prize and passageway for conquerors from both the east and the west for millennia.

Islam arose in an era known as Late Antiquity, a period that began in the fourth century and ended in the seventh. At the end of the sixth century, two empires contended for control of the central plain. To the west of the central plain lay the Roman Empire, also known as the Eastern Roman Empire or the Byzantine Empire. Its capital was Constantinople, a city built on the site of a previously existing village, Byzantium (hence the name Byzantine Empire). It is now called Istanbul. Constantinople was founded by Emperor Constantine in AD 324. Toward the end of that same century, the Roman Empire was divided into two administrative parts, with capitals at Rome and Constantinople. With the fall of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476, Constantinople was, in effect, the sole capital of the Roman Empire. For most of Late Antiquity, the emperors ruling from Constantinople held sway over the Anatolian peninsula, the western Levant, and Egypt.

The Sasanian Empire lay to the east of the central plain. The Sasanian Empire had been founded in the early third century and lasted until the year AD 651. For most of its history, the Sasanian Empire actually controlled an area larger than contemporary Iran, incorporating parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, eastern Anatolia, the southern Caucasus region, and Iraq. As a matter of fact, the Sasanian capital was Ctesiphon, in what is now Iraq, not far from present-day Baghdad.

Ancient empires were not like the nation-states we know. Imperial governments were mainly concerned with collecting taxes and tribute from their populations, expanding the territory from which they might collect taxes and tribute, and maintaining order in their empires to make that tax and tribute collection possible. Imperial governments did not attempt to impose a single language or ideology or culture on their populations. Nor did they much care that the peoples who lived in the territories they governed were of different ethnic backgrounds. Thus, although the state language of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity was Greek and the state religion was Orthodox Christianity, the empire included diverse peoples—Greeks, Latins, Semites, and others—who spoke a variety of vernacular languages and practiced a variety of religions. These included non-Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, Greco-Roman paganism, and local cults.

Likewise, the Sasanian Empire housed a variety of ethnic groups that spoke a variety of languages. Although the empire was governed by a Persian ruling class that spoke a language called Pahlavi (the forerunner of modern Persian), Kurds (mainly in the mountains), Aramaic-speaking Arabs (mainly in Iraq), and a variety of other peoples inhabited the empire. The Sasanian Empire sponsored a state religion, Zoroastrianism. Nevertheless, in many of the most densely inhabited places, such as Iraq, Christianity overshadowed the official religion.

During the sixth century, energetic leaders in both the Sasanian and Roman empires sought to centralize control and expand their territories. The wars they fought against each other were fought mainly in the Middle East. In AD 602,

the Sasanian emperor Chosroes II launched an offensive against the Roman Empire and conquered as far west as Syria and Egypt. He even laid siege to Constantinople before the Roman emperor, Heraclius, counterattacked. The war was devastating for both sides: The Sasanian Empire was, in effect, destroyed by the costs of incessant campaigning and by the loss of Iraq, which had provided more revenue than any other province. The Roman Empire survived, but in a truncated and weakened form. Both empires were thus vulnerable to a challenge from the south.

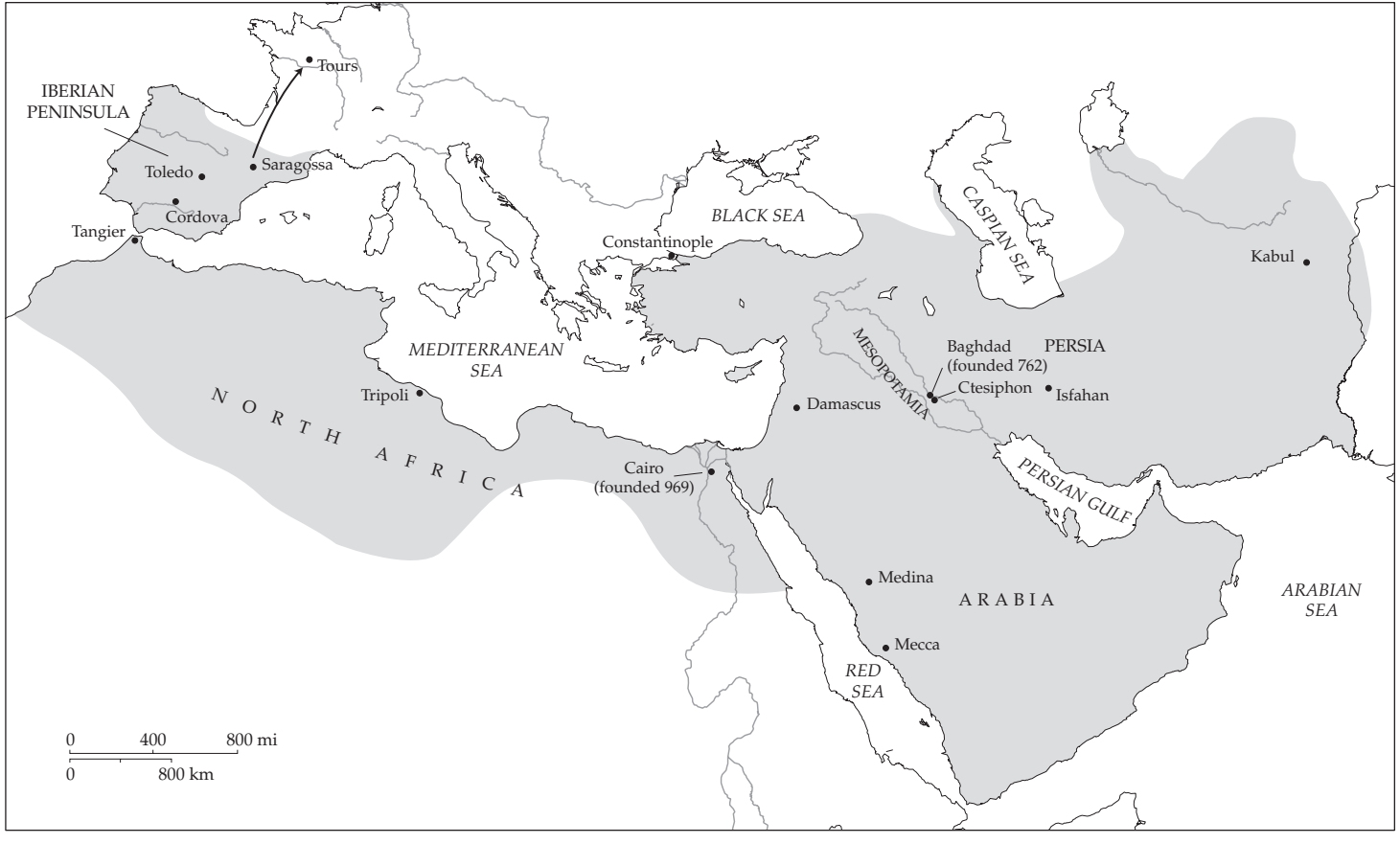
Islamic history begins in AD 622, when the prophet Muhammad fled to the western Arabian town of Medina from his hometown of Mecca, also in western Arabia. Muhammad was a merchant. According to Muslims, at the age of about forty he started receiving revelations from God brought by the archangel Gabriel. Persecuted in Mecca, Muhammad established the first lasting Islamic community in Medina. It is significant that, whereas Christians use the birth of Christ as the starting point of their calendar (AD 1), Muslims use the formation of the Islamic community as the starting point of theirs: 1 AH (which stands for "after *hijra*," i.e., the year of Muhammad's migration) is, in the Christian calendar, AD 622. The notion of the community of believers is important in Islam, and the community established by Muhammad in Medina is particularly important because, as we shall see later, it has provided many with a model for the ideal Islamic community.

Over the course of the next ten years, Muhammad's community continued to grow. By the time of Muhammad's death, much of the Arabian peninsula had joined or was affiliated with the Islamic community of Medina.

The period following Muhammad's death was one of vast Islamic expansion. Within a hundred years of Muhammad's death, Arab/Muslim armies had conquered all of Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Levant. They had pushed back the frontier of the Byzantine Empire in the north, had traversed North Africa, and had crossed the Mediterranean. There is still a trace of this crossing in the name of the rock formation that lies between North Africa and Spain—Gibraltar—derived from the words *jabal Tariq*, the mountain of Tariq, the general who led the Muslim armies into Spain. In AD 732 a Muslim army even launched a foray into the territory that is now France but was turned back. The settlement of Arabs throughout the conquered territories followed the Islamic conquests. Different historians have given various reasons for the expansion of Arab settlement: some claim it was the lure of booty or military pay, others religious obligation or warrior zeal.

During the first century of Islamic history, the Islamic community was united in a single empire. Over time, most of the population of the empire converted to Islam. This did not occur overnight, nor did it occur at the same rate in every territory. Using as evidence the adoption of Arab/Muslim names—Persian children who would have once been named Ardeshir were now bearing the name Muhammad—historians have estimated that one hundred years after the Muslim conquests only about 8 percent of the Persian population was Muslim. By the tenth century, from 70 to 80 percent of the Persian population was Muslim.

The Islamic World at the Time of Muhammad



Islamic Conquests to 750

The rates of conversion were probably faster in Iraq and slower in Egypt. With the exception of Persia, most of the population of the core area adopted Arabic as their language.

Three other aspects of the early period of Islam are important for understanding the subsequent history of the region. First, after the death of Muhammad, there was the question of whether there should be a leader of the Islamic community and, if so, who that leader should be. Prominent members of the community gathered and chose the first caliph, that is, the first successor to Muhammad. Unlike Muhammad, caliphs did not have a special religious role. Muhammad was, according to Islam, the "seal" (the last) of God's prophets. The function of the caliphs was to protect the interests of the community. Questions of religion and religious law remained in the hands of religious scholars called ulama (singular: *ʿalim*). They still do.

Between 1924, when the secularizing government of Turkey deposed the last Ottoman caliph, and 2014, when an Islamic militant from Iraq, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, established what he claimed to be a caliphate in parts of Syria and Iraq and pronounced himself caliph, the Islamic community functioned quite well without one. Now that the Islamic State caliphate has been destroyed, it is doing so again.

During its history, both the nature of the caliphate and its seat of power varied. At first, the caliph acted much like a tribal leader. He was "first among equals" who relied more on his persuasive abilities than on his coercive abilities to lead the community. Later, caliphs adopted much of the pomp and ceremony of the Byzantine and Sasanian courts, and even assumed the title "shadow of God on earth," a title originally used by Sasanian shahs (shah is the title of the ruler of Persia/Iran). Over time, as caliphs increasingly lost political and military control to local princes, the role of the caliph became more and more symbolic.

The first four caliphs ruled from Medina. Their immediate successors ruled from Damascus. This was a logical development because the city lay on major trade routes linking Arabia with the north and Byzantine territories and provided caliphs with access to reserves of warriors from Arabia. As the center of gravity of Islamic territories shifted to the east, and as more and more non-Arabs converted to Islam, the caliphs ruled from Iraq. As a matter of fact, the city of Baghdad was originally built as the administrative capital of the caliphate.

The second aspect of the early Islamic period that would have ramifications for later history was one of several splits in the Islamic community. The split was originally over who would act as successor to Muhammad. Some in the community thought that ʿAli, Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin, should have succeeded Muhammad. They became known as the partisans of ʿAli, or *shiʿat ʿAli*, and later just Shiʿis. Most of the Islamic community followed the choice of a group of leading notables, acquiring the name Sunnis (from the phrase "the people of [Muhammad's] example [*sunna*] and community"). Over time, the split hardened as each community developed its own traditions and sets of beliefs. Today, Shiʿis form a majority of the population in several of the states this book

discusses: Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain. They also form a sometimes substantial minority in others, including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Yemen. Sunnis are predominant in Turkey and, with the exception of Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon, the rest of the Arab world.

One aspect of Shiᶜism merits further explanation. At its inception Shiᶜism was an opposition party. During the early Islamic period, various Shiᶜi sects arose that agreed on a fundamental set of beliefs, even though they had political differences. At the center of these beliefs was the notion that the imam, the leader of the community, should be chosen from the house of ᶜAli, Muhammad's closest male relative. Over time, the Shiᶜi tendency adopted three other beliefs as well. First, Shiᶜis came to believe that the imam alone was the community's teacher and religious leader. Furthermore, they believed that the imam had a special, esoteric (hidden) knowledge. This contrasted with the view of the Sunnis that the community as a whole preserved proper Islamic belief. Finally, Shiᶜis came to believe that the imam had to designate his successor for that successor to be legitimate.

The line of imams continued without interruption from ᶜAli through six generations. The sixth imam named his son Ismaᶜil as his successor. But Ismaᶜil died before his father, and so his father selected his second son, Musa, to succeed him. For some Shiᶜis, this could not be: after all, the imam had secret knowledge and so the father must have foreseen Ismaᶜil's absence. These Shiᶜis thus believed that Ismaᶜil was not really dead, but instead had gone into what is called "occultation." In other words, Ismaᶜil was around, they just did not know where. At the end of time he would return and establish justice and equity on earth. Because Ismaᶜil was to have been the seventh imam, these Shiᶜis were sometimes called Ismaᶜilis. The contemporary Ismaᶜili community in India, which is under the spiritual leadership of the Agha Khan, are their descendants.

Other Shiᶜis, however, acknowledged the ᶜAlid line as it ran through Musa and his descendants. But after the eleventh imam died without apparent heirs, they faced a problem similar to the one they had faced earlier. They came up with a solution similar to the solution at which the Ismaᶜilis had arrived. They believed that the eleventh imam had had a son, but that he was in occultation. These Shiᶜis came to be known as Twelvers, because they awaited the return of the twelfth imam. They represent the bulk of the Shiᶜi population in Lebanon, Iraq, and parts of the Gulf today—and, of course, the home of the largest contemporary Twelver Shiᶜi community, Iran. The idea of occultation raised two issues that would be of crucial importance to the Shiᶜi community in the future: who should govern the community until the reemergence of the hidden imam and how the community should organize its affairs in the meantime.

The final aspect of the early period of Islam that is important for understanding later developments stems from the fact that the number of Arab conquerors was small in comparison with the number of those conquered. This disparity naturally created difficulties for the conquerors. The caliphs attempted to resolve these difficulties by borrowing administrative techniques from the Sasanians and Byzantines.

Vignette

From Nadir to Zenith

Benjamin Disraeli, the first (and only) Jewish-born prime minister of Great Britain, once dressed down an anti-Semitic detractor by reminding him that when his adversary's ancestors were swinging from trees, Disraeli's ancestors were priests in the temple of Solomon. A similar relationship held between the peoples of the Middle East and Europe during the Middle Ages. While unlettered men wielding axes dominated Europe, the caliphate was a world center for scientific inquiry and cultural enrichment. Through encounters in Spain, the Mediterranean, and, during the Crusades, the Middle East, Arabs introduced Europeans to a variety of ideas as well as foods and wares associated with the good life. Many of the Arab contributions to the societies of Europe can be traced through etymology—the study of the origin and development of words. It can be assumed that the introduction of words from Arabic occurred simultaneously with the introduction of ideas and commodities from the Middle East. Some of the following common English words originated in Arabic; others originated in ancient Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit—languages largely unknown in Europe—and were transmitted to English through Arabic:

admiral	almanac	aubergine	candy
adobe	amber	average	caper
albatross	amulet	azimuth	carat
alchemy	aniline	azure	caraway
alcohol	antimony	borax	carmine
alcove	apricot	cable	carob
alembic	arsenal	caliber	check
alfalfa	artichoke	camel	checkmate
algebra	assassin	camise	cipher
alkali	atlas	camphor	coffee

For the most part, the conquerors allowed the inhabitants of the territories they administered to retain their landed property and to maintain local governance. "Peoples of the Book"—a category that included Christians and Jews—were, at least in theory, accorded the status of protected minorities and were allowed to continue practicing their religions. Pagans (polytheists) whom Muslims encountered were not so lucky, and Hindu parents on the Indian subcontinent still spook their children with stories of the eleventh-century Muslim conqueror Mahmud of Ghazna, whose plundering expeditions into India included wholesale massacres. To prevent the much larger local population from swallowing up the conquering Arab/Muslims, Muslim generals in Egypt and Iraq often housed their armies and administrators in settlements outside towns. The custom of allowing local control would continue through Ottoman times.

Islam continued to spread long after the period of the first conquests. For example, it was not until the beginning of the sixteenth century that Islam became firmly established in Indonesia, today the most populous Muslim state.

cork	giraffe	mohair	sirocco
cornea	gypsum	monsoon	soda
cotton	hashish	mufti	sofa
crimson	hazard	mummy	sugar
crocus	henna	muslin	syrup
cumin	jar	nadir	tabby
damask	lacquer	orange	talc
drub	lemon	popinjay	talisman
elixir	lilac	racket	tamarind
gala	lime	safari	tariff
garble	lute	saffron	tarragon
gauze	macabre	satin	zenith
gazelle	magazine	sequin	zero
genie	massacre	sherbet	zircon
gerbil	mattress	sheriff	
ghoul	mocha	sine	

Some words—like coffee, jar, and gazelle—were simply borrowed from Arabic. Others bear more colorful histories. Tabby comes from a street in Baghdad noted for its striped cloth. Assassin comes from hashish, which, according to legend, a Shiᶜi group called the "hashishun" purportedly smoked before going out to kill Crusaders. Racket (as in tennis racket) is derived from the Arabic word for the palm of the hand—the original racket. Gala—as in a gala occasion—comes from the Arabic for a robe of honor or investing with a robe of honor. Satin refers to the city in China (called by Arabs "Zaytun") to which Arab merchants went to trade for the cloth. And checkmate comes from a Persian/Arabic phrase meaning the king (*shah*) is dead (*mat*). As chess aficionados know, a match ends with the trapping (and implied elimination) of the opponent's king.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the tenth century, the core area of the Islamic world began to fragment politically. Part of the reason for this political fragmentation was invasions from outside Islamic domains.

A variety of groups came into the Middle East: crusaders from the West, Mongols from the Far East, and Mongol wannabes (like the legendary Tamerlaine) from Inner Asia. While most Westerners know about the Crusades, most of these military campaigns failed miserably. In fact, the Crusades might actually be considered a sideshow to the main event: invasions from the north and east. For example, the devastation wrought by the Mongols in the Middle East was enormous. According to contemporary accounts, between two hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand people died during the sack of Baghdad. Another city, Nishapur, one of the centers of learning in Persia, never recovered from the command of a Mongol general that "not even cats and dogs should be left alive."

But the Mongol invasions brought more than doom and gloom to the Middle East. Just as the Crusades exposed Europeans to the culture and products of their

eastern neighbors, the Mongol invasions and subsequent "pax Mongolica" (Mongol peace) exposed the inhabitants of the Middle East to their eastern neighbors as well. The Mongol invasions introduced Middle Easterners to new forms of cultural expression, such as miniature painting and Far Eastern motifs still found in Middle Eastern carpets, and Middle Easterners were quick to take advantage of newly opened trade routes linking the eastern Mediterranean with China—as was Marco Polo, who traveled along the famed silk route on his journey from Venice to Cathay.

Despite this, it might be argued that the groups that had the most lasting impact on the Middle East were, in fact, Turkish-speaking peoples from Central Asia. Turkic peoples entered the lands of Islam in two ways. In the tenth century, traders and warriors bought or captured Turks and brought them into Islamic lands to be used as imperial guards for caliphs or slave-soldiers for local warlords. The term used for these military slaves was mamluks (literally, those who are "owned"). Caliphs and local warlords found mamluk warriors useful because they had no connections to any group in the region except their masters. It was therefore assumed that they would be entirely dependent on—and loyal to—those masters. Nevertheless, because mamluk armies often held the balance of power, it was not out of the question for them to seize it.

For example, in 1250 slave-soldiers of a local dynasty in Cairo pushed aside their former masters and began to rule in their own right. Replenishing their ranks with new mamluks, often from the Caucasus (who continued the tradition of overthrowing their masters when the opportunity arose), they ruled independently until 1517 and continued to exercise power in Egypt until the beginning of the nineteenth century. We shall thus meet up with the Egyptian mamluks again later in our story.

Starting in about the eleventh century, entire Turkic tribes began migrating from the Central Asian steppes into the Middle East. Tribes are groups of people who claim descent from a common ancestor, whether they are in reality related to that common ancestor or even to each other. The Turkic tribes that entered the region were, for the most part, pastoralists (think sheep and goats). No one knows for sure why they began migrating south and west. Some historians cite population pressures in their original homelands. Others cite climatic changes that affected all of Eurasia, a strengthening of the Chinese Empire, or the fact that the Middle East was a center of a flourishing civilization whose wealth would naturally attract the attention of outsiders: after all, how are you going to keep them down on the steppe after they've seen Baghdad?

In any case, the superior civilization of Islam dazzled the Turks who came in. For their part, many inhabitants of the Middle East had nothing but contempt for these uncouth tribesman and sheepherders. The great tenth-century Arab historian al-Masᶜudi wrote of the Turks as follows:

> Because of their distance from the circuit of the sun when it rises and sets, there is much snow among the Turks, and cold and damp have conquered their

> habitations; their bodies are slack and thick, and their backbones and neckbones so supple that they can shoot their arrows as they turn and flee. Their joints form hollows because they have so much flesh; their faces are round and their eyes small because the warmth concentrates in their faces while the cold takes possession of their bodies. Those who dwell sixty miles beyond this latitude are Gog and Magog. They are in the sixth climate and are reckoned among the beasts.

The most powerful Turkic tribes that entered the Middle East took control of a given area and established principalities. There they adopted many of the local customs, including Islam. Some of these Turkish states covered large expanses of territory: the state established by a tribe called the Seljuks, for example, stretched from eastern Iran to Syria. Nevertheless, these Turkish states were, for the most part, short-lived. Not only was the size of tribes small in comparison to the populations they sought to control (there were only ten to fifteen thousand Seljuks, for example), but illiterate tribesmen are inherently better at conquest than at rule. There is the story of how one (apparently feisty) Chinese scholar chided a Mongol leader: "An empire can be conquered on horseback, but it cannot be governed on horseback." (We have no record as to how the Mongol leader took this criticism.)

In addition, tribes are notoriously fractious, constantly dividing and reconstituting themselves and constantly warring on each other. As a result, the boundaries of the tribal states were continuously in flux. Often, there was no permanent seat of government. Instead, wherever the army was camped became the de facto capital. Hence, there could be no self-perpetuating bureaucracy to maintain the authority of the state over time. Thus it is that few readers of this book have ever heard of the Ghaznavids and Ghurids, the Saffarids and Samanids, and the Akkoyunlu and Karakoyunlu—the latter being the so-called white sheep and black sheep tribal confederations. All these tribes and tribal confederations established states in the Middle East between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries.

Two states that emerged at the beginning of the sixteenth century did leave a more lasting mark on the region, however: the Ottoman and Safavid empires. The Ottoman Empire began as many other Turkish states had begun. The Ottomans traced their history back to a legendary founder, Osman. Hence, the empire's Turkish name: *Osmanli*. Osman lived in the thirteenth century on the northwestern tip of Anatolia. According to legend, Osman was divinely chosen to found a great empire. While a guest of a respected Muslim preacher, the story goes, Osman went to bed and had a dream:

> A moon arose from the holy man's breast and came to sink in Osman's breast. A tree then sprouted from his navel, and its shade compassed the world. Beneath this shade there were mountains, and streams flowed forth from the foot of each mountain. Some people drank from these running waters, others watered gardens, while yet others caused fountains to flow.

According to the legend, when Osman awoke he told the story to the preacher. The preacher told him, "Osman, my son, congratulations for the imperial office

bestowed upon you and your descendants by God, and take my daughter to be your wife." Apparently, Osman did so.

Sagas report that Osman was a leader of a band of warriors known as ghazis. Much of Anatolia at this time was a lawless frontier, sort of like the Wild West. The only law in town was the Byzantine Empire, which, by the thirteenth century, was a mere shadow of its former splendor. Ghazis made their living by plundering the wealth of their neighbors. Most ghazi principalities therefore consisted of little more than gangs of bandits. But the principality founded by Osman was different: because it bordered on the Byzantine territories, Osman's state had more to loot and therefore attracted increasing numbers of ghazis. Because increasing numbers of ghazis led to increasing wealth, Osman's state could also attract artisans, merchants, religious scholars—all the elements necessary to establish a real state. Even peasants were attracted to the Ottoman state: under the Byzantines, peasants had been serfs; that is, the property of their lords. The Ottomans never introduced serfdom into their domains. Under the Ottomans peasants were not property, although most were bound to the land.

The descendants of Osman began their conquests in the far west of Anatolia and in the Balkans, the mountainous territory of southeastern Europe. By the 1350s the Ottomans had a permanent foothold in Europe. In 1389, they defeated a coalition of Serbs, Hungarians, and Bulgarians at the Battle of Kosovo. Less than a hundred years later, the Ottomans finished off the Byzantine Empire by conquering Constantinople. For the next seventy years, they consolidated their position in Anatolia and the Balkans.

In the meantime, a threat to Ottoman power was arising to the east. During the first half of the fifteenth century, a band of Turkish pastoralists who lived in northern Persia gave their allegiance to another legendary figure, Safi al-Din, from whom the Safavid dynasty got its name. Safi al-Din was the leader of a sufi order; that is, the leader of one of a variety of popular, often mystical Islamic movements. The followers of Safi al-Din were recognizable by their distinctive red headdress, which is why the Ottomans called them Qizilbash (red head).

Qizilbash missionaries spread throughout eastern Anatolia and northern Persia. By 1501, the Safavid leader Isma^{c}il, who claimed to be a descendant of Safi al-Din, entered the northern Persian city of Tabriz and proclaimed himself shah. He was fourteen at the time, putting Alexander the Great, who took his throne at the ripe old age of twenty, to shame. Within ten years all of Persia was under Isma^{c}il's control. Soon thereafter, Shah Isma^{c}il proclaimed Shi^{c}ism to be the official religion of his realm and imported Shi^{c}i religious scholars from Lebanon and the Persian Gulf island of Bahrain to spread Shi^{c}i doctrines.

The establishment of an expansionist Shi^{c}i state on their borders was a strategic threat to the Ottomans. Ottoman sultans were fond of quoting the thirteenth-century Persian poet Sa^{c}di, who wrote, "Ten dervishes can sleep in one blanket, but two kings cannot be contained on a continent." War soon erupted between the two states and, in 1514, at the Battle of Chaldiran, Ottoman gunners overwhelmed the Safavid cavalry and pushed back the Safavid army. In

the wake of the battle, a frontier that roughly corresponds to the present-day border between the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran divided Ottoman and Safavid domains. Perhaps even more important, to protect the southern flank of their newly acquired territory, the Ottomans began their conquest of the Arab Middle East. They did not stop until they reached the Iraqi-Persian border in the east, the Arabian peninsula in the south, and the borders of Morocco in North Africa in the west.

CHAPTER 2

Gunpowder Empires

Previous to the Ottomans and Safavids, Turkic and Mongolian rulers brought to the Middle East a new form of state that historians often refer to as the "military-patronage state." Numerous military-patronage states existed in the post-Turkic, post-Mongol Middle East. Nevertheless, they all shared three essential characteristics. First, military-patronage states were, like the name suggests, essentially military. At the head of society was a chief military leader who would rely on subleaders for local governance. Society comprised two "classes": a ruling military class, which performed military and other services for the rulers; and the remainder of the population, which produced taxable surplus. The second characteristic of military-patronage states was that nearly all economic resources belonged to the chief military family or families. The ruling family or families could and did redistribute these resources as they wished. They often did so in return for the aforementioned services rendered by subchiefs or local notables; hence, the "patronage" in the "military-patronage state." Finally, the laws of military-patronage states combined dynastic law, local custom, and Islamic law (*shari*^{c}*a*).

As mentioned, the military-patronage states that arose before the Ottomans and Safavids were naturally unstable. While the family of a military or tribal chieftain might carve out such a state, it was dependent on other military leaders to control local areas. These leaders, often other tribal leaders, had little loyalty to the dynasties they were supposed to support. Furthermore, because the territory governed by a military or tribal chieftain was frequently large, it was difficult to rule. After all, military chieftains had none of the advantages of modern communications or transportation. Turkic and Mongolian chiefs therefore frequently divided their territories among their sons, thus splitting up empires after a single generation. Finally, the boundaries of the states were constantly in flux as a result of incessant warfare. And because there was rarely a permanent seat of government in such a state, no permanent bureaucracy could be established to maintain the authority of the state over time.

The introduction of new technology put an end to the instability inherent to military-patronage states: gunpowder weapons. Gunpowder weapons were a technological marvel and they gave their user an extraordinary advantage in warfare. But they were expensive and required a certain level of trade and industrial development to produce. Those dynasts who could harness gunpowder weapons could do a number of things that rival military chieftains had difficulty doing: They could subdue tribes and less technologically advanced military chiefs; they could protect their realms against invasion from other dynasts; they could build stable bureaucracies to collect revenue; and they could provide security for agriculture. This last factor was key: after all, in the early modern period states derived almost all their revenues from agriculture or pastoralism. Commerce, on the other hand, did not actually produce wealth; it merely rearranged it.

The Ottoman Empire was the first of the two empires to harness gunpowder weapons. Some historians claim that the Ottomans first learned of them from renegade Christians and used them, to devastating effect, to win the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. The Ottomans certainly used gunpowder weapons effectively during their siege of Constantinople—a siege that finished off the last remnants of the fifteen-hundred-year-old Roman Empire. Historian Edward Gibbon describes the final days of Constantinople in his famous *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* as follows:

> After a siege of forty days the fate of Constantinople could no longer be averted. The diminutive garrison was exhausted: the fortifications, which had stood for ages against hostile violence, were dismantled on all sides by the Ottoman cannon; many breaches were opened, and near the gate of St. Romanus four towers had been levelled with the ground. . . . From the lines, the galleys, and the bridge, the Ottoman artillery thundered on all sides; and the camp and city, the Greeks and the Turks, were involved in a cloud of smoke, which could only be dispelled by the final deliverance or destruction of the Roman Empire. The single combats of the heroes of history or fable amuse our fancy and engage our affections: the skilful evolutions of war may inform the mind, and improve a necessary, though pernicious science. But in the uniform and odious pictures of a general assault, all is blood, and horror, and confusion.

The Ottomans again used gunpowder weapons against the Safavids at the Battle of Chaldiran. Learning from their mistakes, the Safavids adopted the weapons soon thereafter.

It is interesting to note that the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople took place in 1453, the same year that the Hundred Years' War (which, in fact, lasted 116 years) ended. The group that turned the tide in that war and forced the British invaders to withdraw from all but a small foothold on the European continent was the Burgundians, the most advanced cannon makers in Europe. As of at least 1453, then, the use of gunpowder weapons had become essential for the survival of states. It also affected the internal dynamics of states.

Harnessing gunpowder weapons enabled the Ottoman and Safavid empires to adopt important features of the military-patronage model while at the same

Vignette

The Battle of Kosovo

In his famous essay, "What Is a Nation?" nineteenth-century French philosopher Ernest Renan wrote, "Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort." No grief is more important to the Serbian national myth than the defeat inflicted on the Serbian leader Tsar Lazar by the Ottomans at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. For Serbs, a tradition of epic poetry sustained the memory of the battle. One such poem, "Musitch Stefan," recounts Tsar Lazar's admonition to his followers on the eve of battle as follows:

Whoso is a Serb, from Serbian mother,
Who has Serbian blood and Serbian lineage,
And comes not to battle, to Kosovo,
May there never to his heart be granted
Children, neither yet a maid or man-child.
Underneath his hands shall nothing prosper,
Neither vineyards nor the silver wheat fields,
And from him shall misery be oozing
Till his name and race die out and perish.

After the emergence of Serbian nationalism in the nineteenth century, many Serbs came to regard Kosovo as "our Jerusalem." Unfortunately for Serbian

time avoiding many of the problems of their predecessors. Just as a military chief stood at the head of previous military-patronage states, at the top of Ottoman society was the sultan, a member of the house of Osman. At the top of Safavid society was the shah, a descendent of Isma'il. But, unlike their predecessors, the sultans and shahs did not divide their lands among their sons. They did not have to: gunpowder weapons gave them the ability to establish a central government whose reach, when applied, could be felt throughout a vast empire.

While sultans and shahs remained at the center of imperial governments throughout the Ottoman and Safavid eras, the function each played in governance evolved over time. During the initial stages of conquest, the sultans and shahs were warriors-in-chief. They led campaigns of conquest and even met each other on the field of battle. As further expansion brought diminishing economic returns, the role of warrior-in-chief was no longer necessary. In fact, because continuous military campaigning brought no new sources of revenue and few other benefits to their empires, it could be downright detrimental. Sultans and shahs thus became less warriors-in-chief than ceremonial icons at the center of a well-oiled bureaucracy. The fact that they withdrew from public view, emerging for infrequent but spectacular religious or dynastic events, only enhanced their iconic status and the ability of the bureaucracy to function without disruption.

Historians used to look at the loss of a warrior ethos among the leaders of the Ottoman and Safavid empires and call it "decline." It was not decline so much as a shift in the function of the sultan or shah. As a matter of fact, it might be argued

nationalists, during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries much of the ethnically Serbian population of the region had left and had been replaced by Albanian Muslims. In the aftermath of World War I, Serbia became a province of Yugoslavia, a state established as a homeland for southern Slavs. Because of its distinct history and ethnic composition, the Yugoslav government granted Kosovo autonomous status within the province of Serbia in 1974. Soon after the Serbian nationalist Slobodan Milosevic became leader of Yugoslavia in 1987, he revoked Kosovar autonomy, sparking resistance and calls for Kosovar independence. With the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991, Milosevic began a campaign to end this resistance and, more ominously, to "protect" the ethnic Serbian population of the region by driving ethnic Albanians from their homes. In the resulting "ethnic cleansing," upwards of five thousand ethnic Albanian Kosovars were killed and nine hundred thousand displaced. Ethnic cleansing only ended after a NATO bombing campaign forced Milosevic to relent. Throughout it all, Milosevic exploited the potent symbol of the original battle. Standing on the battlefield, he exhorted Serbs to stand united: "The Kosovo heroism has been inspiring our creativity for six centuries and has been feeding our pride and does not allow us to forget that at one time we were an army, great, brave, and proud, one of the few that remained undefeated when losing."

that after states get established and stabilized, the more leaders interfere with their day-to-day operation the more trouble they create. Think of how fortunate Americans are that no matter how inept their president might be, institutions upon which they depend endure. On the other hand, one of the reasons for the longevity of the Ottoman Empire and the Persian empires of the Safavids and their successors, the Qajars, was that these empires could and did respond to changing circumstances. Thus, during the nineteenth century sultans and shahs once again sought to reassert themselves against an entrenched bureaucracy that opposed their plans to restructure their empires along the lines of European states.

Other factors link the Ottoman and Safavid empires to the military-patronage model as well. Both empires divided their populations into two categories (military and nonmilitary), much as their predecessors had done. Very often, the members of the military class were considered property of the sultan or shah. The Ottomans recruited potential soldiers and bureaucrats from among the children of their Balkan Christian subjects. This process of recruitment (*devshirme*) remains a sore spot in Balkan historiography: while many contemporary Turks prefer to look at the process of recruitment as purely voluntary, the word kidnapping is not unknown in histories written by Greek scholars.

Although Islamic tradition forbade what was, in effect, the enslavement of Christians or, indeed, any People of the Book, the Ottomans were able to get around this injunction with an extraordinarily creative legal maneuver. Ottoman jurists argued that Balkan Christians were different from Christians

encountered by Muslims previously. Balkan Christians, they argued, had converted to Christianity after the advent of Islam, not before, and therefore should have known better when choosing their religious preference. Besides, those enlisted in this way were not really slaves; they were "war booty."

Regardless of the legalities, these recruits were converted to Islam, then underwent rigorous training. Some recruits remained soldiers, entering the elite Ottoman infantry as "janissaries." The Ottomans siphoned off others into the bureaucracy, where they could become scribes or even governors of provinces. In other words, former Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire might rise to high imperial positions.

A similar process took place in the Safavid Empire. To break the power of the Qizilbash and strengthen the central government, Shah Abbas (r. 1588–1629) imported slaves from the Caucasus: Georgians, Armenians, Circassians, and so on. In one year alone (1616), his armies brought 130,000 Georgians back to Persia. In Persia, these slaves were known as *ghilman* (singular: *ghulam*). Shah Abbas not only used these slaves in the bureaucracy and royal household, he made them into a forty-thousand-man standing army equipped with firearms. As in the Ottoman Empire, some were able to rise to high rank in Persia. By the end of Shah Abbas's reign, about half of the provincial governors were ghilman.

Overall, the use of slaves offered sultans and shahs a way out of perhaps the most serious problem of military-patronage states: their tendency to fragment. Sultans and shahs created an army and bureaucracy loyal to the central government alone. This enabled them to break the power of local warlords and potentates.

Two other aspects of the Ottoman and Safavid system link them with their predecessors. Like the rulers of previous military-patronage states, the ruling dynasties of the Ottoman and Safavid empires laid claim to the most important economic resource: land. Under this system, called prebendalism, land was considered to be the possession of the ruling dynasty, and the peasants who lived on the land enjoyed a number of freedoms. Peasants had the right to live on, work, and consume the fruits of their lands, in exchange for which they surrendered much of the surplus of their harvests in the form of taxes. But they did not own the lands they worked as "freehold" and could not sell them.

Sometimes, the Ottomans and Safavids bestowed on military leaders, governors, and local notables the right to keep the profits from parcels of land. In exchange, these select individuals had to provide military or administrative services. In the Ottoman Empire, these land grants were called *timar*s, in the Safavid Empire, *tiyul*.

The Ottoman and Safavid empires were early modern empires that attempted to govern huge expanses of land. The imperial governments were therefore not particularly adept at collecting revenues, especially revenues from far-flung provinces. This was not a problem for these empires alone: all early modern empires, from Europe to East Asia, were in the same boat. Different empires attempted to resolve this difficulty in various ways. Over time, to help with the collection of taxes, both the Ottoman and Safavid empires auctioned off to enterprising notables, merchants, civil servants, and the like the right to collect and keep the taxes

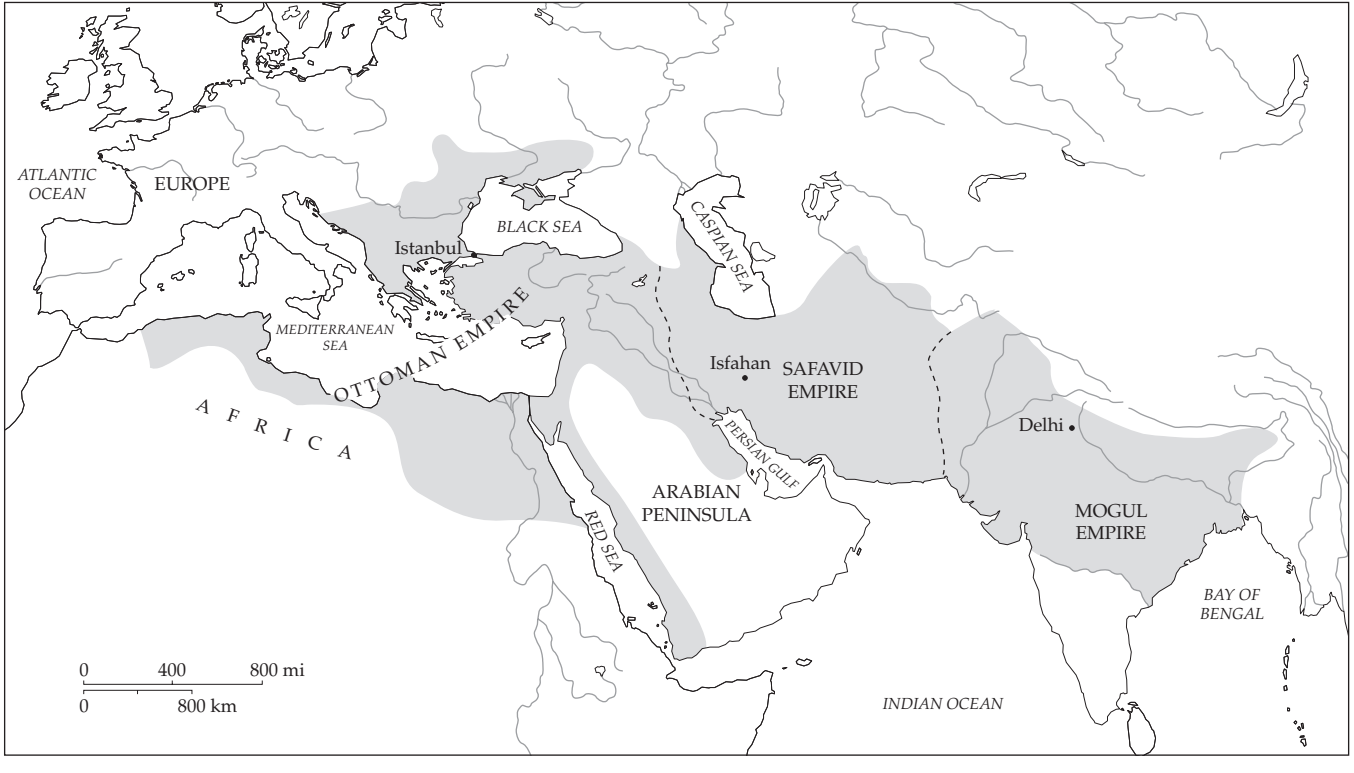
owed from plots of land for a specified period of time. The price for this right depended (theoretically) on the outcome of competitive bidding and, when successful, competitive bidding enabled the Ottoman and Safavid governments to accumulate tax revenue upfront. This arrangement is known as tax farming.

Historians dispute whether this system was beneficial or detrimental to imperial governance. Some assert that tax farming, combined with imperial inefficiency and the increasing length of time tax farmers could maintain control of the revenues from their lands, alienated land and revenue from the central government. Others claim just the opposite. The latter assert that tax farming was actually a novel solution to a problem faced by all early modern empires and, in fact, might have been the best that an early modern empire could hope to do to collect the money it was owed, tap into privately held wealth, and thereby give local elites a stake in the imperial system. And it wasn't just the collection of taxes from land that the Ottomans and Safavids farmed out: they farmed out the right to collect customs duties from ports and other enterprises as well.

To expand the wealth of the central government or ruler, and to direct economic resources into vital areas, such as important cities, the Ottoman and Safavid governments sometimes created government monopolies over agricultural and industrial products. For example, because silk was the largest Persian export, Shah Abbas established a silk monopoly. He took one-third of all silk produced in Persia as tax and paid the producers a fixed rate for the remainder. The Ottoman and Safavid governments also encouraged the formation of guilds. Guilds consisted of all practitioners of a given industry—from apprentices to master craftsmen—in a given city or region. There were guilds for those involved in metalwork, textiles, building, baking, transport, and even entertainment. Government sponsorship of guilds enabled the Ottomans and Safavids to regulate prices and help gather taxes. The government assigned each guild a certain amount of taxes that was to be collected from its members; the masters of each guild divided responsibility for its payment.

Finally, like earlier military-patronage states, the Ottoman and Safavid empires based the laws of the land on a combination of Islamic and dynastic law. This brings us to an important aspect of both empires: the role of religion.

Both the Ottoman and Safavid empires used religion to legitimate their rule. In the case of the Ottomans, it was Sunni Islam; in the case of the Safavids, it was Shiʿi Islam. Again, putting religion to use in this way was not unique to the Islamic world: Henry VIII of England, for example, established his own church (which most kings and queens of England have headed ever since), and other European monarchs claimed that they had a divine right to rule. In the early modern world, dynasties throughout Eurasia used religion to legitimate their rule in one of two ways. Sometimes, dynasties presented themselves as protectors of religion. The Ottoman sultans occasionally asserted their role as caliph, took part in religious ritual, sought legitimacy as protectors of Mecca and Medina, appointed judges in the Muslim courts, and sponsored religious endowments. Since making the trip to Mecca and Medina (*hajj*) was a requirement for all Muslims who could do so, sultans even organized the hajj caravan from Istanbul to the Arabian holy cities.



Gunpowder Empires, 1700

Each sultan took his religious responsibilities more or less seriously. Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), for example, attempted to demonstrate his religiosity by reconstructing and refurbishing Jerusalem, the third holiest city in Islam. He rebuilt the walls of the city (which exist to this day) and constructed aqueducts, fountains, hospitals, and schools there. Likewise, the Safavids claimed to be the protectors of Shiᶜi Islam. In some cases, they went even further: they attempted to fit themselves into the Shiᶜi narrative of history. For example, at various times, according to different sources, Shah Ismaᶜil represented himself as a descendent of ᶜAli, a representative of the hidden imam, the hidden imam himself, ᶜAli, or even God.

As had been the case earlier, religious minorities could organize many of their own affairs, including education, social services, charities, and law. Later—it is not known exactly when but probably varied from community to community—each minority religious community in the Ottoman Empire was represented in Istanbul by a religious dignitary from the sect. Each religious community came to be known as a *millet*, and this system of organizing the relationship between the state and religious communities came to be known as the millet system.

Before we can leave the discussion of the institutions of the Ottoman and Safavid empires, it is necessary to emphasize two points. What this chapter has so far presented is the ideal, which likely differed from the way things really worked. Unfortunately, historians are forced to work mainly from official texts—which is like reading the *Federalist Papers* to understand how the United States government actually operates.

Second, both the Ottoman and Safavid empires began as early modern empires. Their ability to control events and territory waxed and waned over time. In the past, historians assumed that direct political control was a sign of imperial strength, while lack of direct political control was a sign of decline. We know better now: the Ottoman Empire lasted more than four hundred years. The Safavid Empire lasted more than two hundred. Each empire was either very lucky or was able to adapt.

At times, adaptation demanded decentralization. As we shall see, during the eighteenth century the power of local warlords was greater than the power of the central government to control them. These local warlords, such as Dhahir al-ᶜUmar and Ahmad Jazzar in Palestine and ᶜAli Bey al-Kabir and Mehmet Ali (Muhammad ᶜAli) in Egypt, were able to take control of tracts of territory that were sometimes huge. We also shall see that, by applying techniques of political organization associated with modern states, the Ottoman Empire was able to reassert central control, albeit over a geographically diminished empire. In other words, the passage of the early modern Ottoman Empire to the modern Ottoman Empire entailed the progressive abandonment of structures and institutions associated with those the empire had adopted in the early modern period and their replacement by those more suitable for the modern age.

In terms of longevity, however, the Safavids were not so lucky: the power of the central administration began to decline following the death of Abbas the Great and, in 1722, Afghan invaders overthrew the Safavid dynasty. The Safavid domains entered into a period of war and instability that lasted close to three-quarters of a century.

CHAPTER 3

The Middle East and the Modern World System

The great University of Chicago historian Marshall G. S. Hodgson once wrote that if a visitor from Mars had come to Earth during the sixteenth century, he would have taken a look at the political, military, and cultural power of the Middle Eastern gunpowder empires and concluded that the entire world would shortly become Muslim. These empires not only ruled vast territories, they seemed to have resolved many of the problems of governance that had frustrated their predecessors. Yet, by the seventeenth century, Middle Eastern gunpowder empires were in deep crisis. In all fairness, these empires were not the only states in crisis at this time: states from Britain and France to China also entered periods of difficulty. The problems these empires faced were so similar that historians even have a term for what was going on: the "crisis of the seventeenth century."

Britain, France, China, and the Ottoman and Safavid empires all experienced the same problem: the inability of imperial governments to maintain their authority within their territories. Civil and religious wars wracked France and Britain. In China, the seventeenth century brought peasant insurrection and the collapse of the Ming Dynasty, which had ruled for almost three hundred years. The imperial Ottoman government faced popular rebellions, military revolts, and the appearance of warlords who challenged the central government from Anatolia in the north to Baghdad in the east and Yemen and Egypt in the south. Numerous calamities had so weakened the Safavid Empire that in 1722 it became easy prey for invaders from the north.

While there were probably multiple causes for the crisis of the seventeenth century, many historians have emphasized the role played by the general rise in prices that struck almost all of the Eurasian continent. Some have called this the "great inflation"; others, the "price revolution." Historians argue that inflation is the key to the crisis because the imperial governments that ruled in Europe and Asia at that time were, unlike the states that had preceded them, particularly dependent on a cash economy. There were two reasons for this. First, governments throughout Eurasia had attempted to displace the warlords and tame the

aristocracies that had provided services to the crown by building armies and bureaucracies loyal to the central government alone. Building these armies and bureaucracies was expensive, and soldiers and bureaucrats had to be paid. Inflation raised the costs of maintaining them in the manner to which they had grown accustomed. Imperial states were, it appears, always short of money.

In addition, as newly centralized empires reached the limits of their expansion, rulers had to find new ways to legitimate their rule. As we have seen, the sultans and shahs of the Ottoman and Safavid empires could no longer claim a right to rule based on their position as warrior-in-chief or even on their personal magnetism or charisma. Imperial governments now entered a phase of their history that the great German sociologist Max Weber called the "routinization of charisma." This was a period in which rulers and bureaucrats had to focus on the mundane problems of running the day-to-day affairs of state. No longer riding at the head of armies, emperors, sultans, and shahs had to find new means to represent their authority to their subjects and outsiders alike. Many did so by building sumptuous palaces and capital cities or by staging elaborate ceremonials that displayed the splendor of their court. This was, after all, the era of Louis XIV of France (r. 1661–1715), the "Sun King," from whose magnificent court in Versailles power radiated. In a similar vein, a British traveler recorded the effect that Shah Abbas's capital city of Isfahan had on both Persians and foreigners:

> The City has no need of Walls, where so many Marble Mountains stand as a Guard, or Bulwark of Defence. . . . The Circumference of the Body of the City I guess may measure Seven Miles; but if the dispersed Gardens and Seats of the Great Men, with the Palace Royal be brought into that Computation, we must allow it as many Pharsangs [the distance a man can walk in one day]. . . . Its Founder (or at least, Adorner) Shaw Abas the Great, advisedly chose it for his Imperial Throne, that thence he might more readily disperse his Mandates to any suffering Part assaulted by the bold Incursions of his Enemies; irradiating like the Sun in the Firmament all within the Sphere of this Government: So that while the utmost of his Dominions are seasonably supplied with the comfortable Warmth of his Protection, he safely resides within, invulnerable.

Shah Abbas once proclaimed, "To know Isfahan is to know half the world." Such splendor cost money.

Historians do not agree on what sparked the inflation that led to the crisis of the seventeenth century. There are three main theories. Some historians blame the inflation on demographic expansion. During the sixteenth century, they argue, the Eurasian continent experienced rapid population growth. It is estimated that during the sixteenth century alone, the population of Syria, Egypt, and Anatolia, for example, increased by 40 percent. Again, we are not really sure why this might have been the case. Some claim that the centralized states were able to provide better security for agriculturists than their predecessors had, and with better security came more agricultural production and population increase. Others maintain that the population of Eurasia naturally expanded in the aftermath of the Black Death that had devastated Eurasia during the fourteenth century, or that populations were better able to control the spread of infectious diseases.

Painting of the Safavid shah Suleiman and his courtiers by the Persian artist Ali Quli Jabbar, ca. 1660s or 1670s. Notice the Dutch supplicant to the left of the shah. (*From: Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar, eds.,* Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785–1925 *[Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum of Art in association with I.B. Tauris, 1988), 120.*)

Whatever the reason, historians argue that the increase in population put tremendous pressure on available resources and sparked an inflation as demand for goods began to exceed supply. They point to the fact that the crisis only began to abate after population growth stagnated during the seventeenth century.

Other historians argue that the unusual dependence of states on cash was reason enough for the inflation. States spent an enormous amount of money to sustain their employees. In Persia, for example, an estimated 38 percent of the state's expenditures went to the army. Another 41 percent went to the imperial harem, the royal family, and royal attendants. States competed with the private sector for resources, and this drove up prices. States frequently compounded their problems by debasing their currencies to meet their payrolls. This meant that they often mixed the gold or silver of their currencies with baser metals and attempted to pass these new currencies off as the real thing. Because debased currency was worth less, prices rose and government employees demanded higher salaries.

It seems obvious to us now that the debasement of currencies would inevitably lead to a vicious cycle: debasement would induce price increases, which, in turn, would encourage shortsighted governments to undertake further debasement. But during the early modern period, notions of economics, where they existed at all, were even cruder than they are today.

Sometimes, this guilelessness led to absurd consequences: Spain, for example, went bankrupt twice during the sixteenth century, first in 1557, then again in 1575. In the second instance, when King Philip II of Spain found himself overwhelmed by creditors, he simply called together church leaders who told him what he wanted to hear: because usury (the charging of interest) was a sin, he was under no obligation to pay back his creditors. The king, finding within himself a wellspring of piety of which he had previously been unaware, obeyed. Spain was not alone in its folly: in the first half of the sixteenth century, the Netherlands, Portugal, and France, like Spain, spent almost twice as much to extract wealth from the New World and to make war on each other so they might extract wealth from the New World than they actually wrested from the Americas.

This brings us to the third possible reason for the inflation of the sixteenth century: the Spanish conquest of the New World. When they arrived in Mexico and Peru, Spanish conquistadors found tons of precious metals in the Inca and Aztec empires. Huge amounts of gold and particularly silver flooded first into Europe, then into Asia. Wherever the precious metals hit, prices went up. In the six decades between the conquest of Mexico and Peru and 1575, prices in Western Europe increased between 300 and 400 percent. Historians, using the sudden increases in bread prices as their measure, have even timed the journey of precious metals from west to east: first Seville and Cadiz, then Paris, then Muscovy, then Istanbul and Delhi, then Beijing. Thus, in 1660 a European trader compared Persia to a huge caravansary—a stopping place and trading center for caravans—with a gate in the west and a gate in the east. Coins, he explained, entered Safavid domains from the Ottoman Empire in the west, circulated in Persia, driving up prices, and finally exited through the eastern gate of Persia to India.

While some historians remain skeptical about the circulation of New World gold and silver to points as far away as the Middle and Far East, others point out that even if the precious metals did not actually reach that far, the looting of the New World had momentous effects on economies throughout Eurasia. They argue that new stocks of precious metals increased the velocity of trade, first among the states of Western Europe, then between the states of Western Europe and the rest of the continent. According to economists, an increased velocity of trade naturally increases inflation.

Even if we do not wish to take economists at their word (a good idea, in light of their repeated failings), the arrival of new stocks of precious metals into Europe and the resulting inflation certainly did produce dramatic effects throughout Eurasia. It is well known, for example, that the imperial Ottoman government was unable to halt the smuggling of huge amounts of such commodities as wood, metals, wheat, raw silk, and wool out of the Ottoman Empire and into Europe, where they fetched higher prices. This smuggling denied the Ottoman government precious customs revenues and inhibited its ability to buy social peace: after all, without an adequate supply of basic commodities, the imperial government could not guarantee that there would be adequate provisions for the cities in its domains. At the same time, the smuggling denied to Ottoman artisans the raw

materials they needed to produce their wares and weakened the guilds that had been established in part to protect their members.

Whatever the role of Spanish silver, most historians agree that sometime during the sixteenth century the world economy began to undergo a revolutionary change. Among the historians who pioneered the research into this change were those who advocated something called "world systems analysis." In its most abstract form, world systems analysis runs something like this:

From the beginning of recorded time through the beginning of the sixteenth century, much of the world comprised what might be called "world empires." Taken together, these world empires made up what world systems analysts call the "system of world empires."

The system of world empires had four characteristics. First, it was possible for several world empires to exist at the same time. For example, the early Ottoman Empire existed at the same time as did the Safavid, Habsburg (Austrian), and Chinese empires. Second, world empires spread through military conquest or the threat of military conquest. In other words, a world empire was no larger than the territory from which an imperial government might be able to extract taxes or tribute. In addition, each world empire provided for most of its economic needs independent of other world empires. Trade did take place, of course, and this trade was not just in luxury items. As a matter of fact, trade often involved bulk items such as cereals or wood. But in the system of world empires the economies of the trading partners were roughly equivalent and no economy was more "advanced" or dominated another. This is a far cry from the relationship among trading nations today, as we shall see.

This brings us to the final characteristic of the system of world empires: each world empire was roughly equivalent to any nearby empire that existed at the same time. For example, no empire was technologically superior to any other, nor was any empire organized in a manner that gave it a particular advantage over any other. This stands to reason: if an empire fell behind economically or technologically, it would fall prey to its competitors.

Beginning about 1500, the system of world empires began to change into what world systems analysts call the "modern world system" or "modern world economy." This change did not occur overnight—it required several centuries to complete. The crisis of the seventeenth century, described at the beginning of this chapter, might be seen as the birth pangs of the modern world system. (As we shall see, the strategies employed by rulers to address that crisis would, in many cases, come to define the future position of their states in that system.) Judging by the effects of the Depression of 1873, which affected every inhabited continent on the globe, we might say with assurance that by at least that year the modern world economy was in place. It has been with us ever since.

Like the system of world empires, the modern world economy possesses a number of distinguishing characteristics. Unlike the system of world empires, which was, for the most part, politically and economically fragmented, the modern world economy is politically fragmented but economically united.

In other words, rather than consisting of independent empires that provided for most of their own needs, the modern world economy consists of independent states that participate in a single, integrated global economic system—a single market, if you will.

Furthermore, while world empires spread their influence solely through conquest or the threat of conquest, the modern world system spread its influence by bringing outlying districts into a single economic structure. This has occurred through conquest as well, of course, but it also has occurred through the pull of the international market. Since the sixteenth century, agricultural producers throughout the world have discovered that they might profit more from producing goods for the international market than from producing merely for their own consumption. Where agriculturalists themselves did not take the initiative, governments often encouraged the transition to accumulate more revenue from taxation and a supply of foreign currencies to buy goods they could not manufacture at home.

Finally, while the system of world empires consisted of roughly equivalent states, some states in the world economy are more technologically and economically "advanced" than others and benefit more than others from the global marketplace. In effect, there are winners and losers in the modern world economy.

At first, Western European states acted as the engine that drove the modern world economy. These states brought other parts of the globe into the world market they dominated, but in a subordinate role. Thus, while states in Western Europe produced manufactured goods that they exported internationally, other parts of the globe bought the products produced in Western European factories and, in turn, produced the raw materials that fed those factories. As a result, the world economy came to contain distinct units: a developed core (first, states in Western Europe, then states in Western Europe and North America, then states in Western Europe and North America along with Japan) and what is called the periphery; that is, states at a lower technological and economic level. Some analysts have created a middle category, the semiperiphery, which includes states that share attributes with both the core and the periphery. The boundaries of the modern world economy expanded for centuries until it encompassed the entire globe. World systems analysts call this process, which had an important effect on the Middle East, integration and peripheralization.

Because states in Western Europe functioned as the core of the modern world economy at its inception, the modern world economy spread to outlying regions of the globe during periods in which the European economy expanded. One such period took place in the early nineteenth century, during the relatively peaceful years that followed the Napoleonic Wars (that is, after 1815). Not coincidentally, this is the period we associate with the industrial revolution. It was during this period that the modern world economy integrated much of the Ottoman Empire. Points further east—Iraq and Persia—had to wait until the second half of the nineteenth century.

To understand how the world economy integrated the Middle East in the status of periphery, we must go back to the sixteenth century.

Vignette

Coffee

During the sixteenth century, a multiplicity of foods introduced from the New World, including corn (maize), potatoes, yams, peanuts, squash, chili peppers, tomatoes, pumpkins, chocolate, and manioc (tapioca), enriched the European table. Between meals, Europeans could, for the first time, sit down with a pipe of tobacco (also introduced from the New World) or chew gum made from chicle—hence "Chiclets"—likewise a New World import. This was one side of what is called the "Columbian exchange." (In return, the inhabitants of the Americas got cattle, pigs, horses, German measles, and smallpox.)

One commodity, however, made the trip from another direction: Coffee, introduced into Europe about a century after the previously cited items, originated in the Middle East.

The history of coffee is enshrouded in legend. There is, for example, the tale of its origins: the story goes that in the ninth century an Ethiopian goat herder discovered coffee when he noticed his goats got a bit frisky after they ate the berries of a local shrub. After sampling the berries himself, he, too, experienced the same effect, as did those who undertook coffee cultivation in Arabia when it arrived there three centuries later. There is the story of the first coffeehouse in Vienna: the emperor asked the man who acted as a guide for the Polish cavalry that raised the 1683 Ottoman siege of that city what he wanted as a reward. Rather than the usual "the hand of your daughter in marriage," he reportedly asked for the bulging sacks he saw in the abandoned Ottoman encampment, thinking they contained gold. In fact, they contained coffee beans. Thus, the first Viennese coffeehouse. (Strudel and *Linzertorten* would come later.) Then there is the story of the origin of tipping: in early British coffeehouses, coffee wenches placed cups for coins on each table. On the cups was inscribed "to insure prompt service"—abbreviated T.I.P.S.

Regardless of the truth of any or all of these stories, early travelers to the Middle East were amazed by coffee and the coffeehouses they found there. One Portuguese traveler, Pedro Teixeira, stopped off in Baghdad in the mid-1580s on his way to India and reported his first encounter with coffee as follows:

> Amongst other public buildings . . . is a *Casa de Kaoáh* [Teixeira's *kaoáh* is borrowed from the Arabic word for coffee, *qahwah*]. Coffee is a vegetable of the size and appearance of little dry beans, brought from Arabia, prepared and sold in public houses built to that end; wherein all men who desire it meet to

At their inception, both the Ottoman and Safavid empires stabilized and induced an expansion of the Middle Eastern economy. The Ottomans and Safavids, like all successful empire builders, encouraged economic self-sufficiency. They did this in a host of ways: by extending rural security, repairing and building infrastructure, making tax collection more efficient and less harsh, removing barriers to intraregional trade, establishing government monopolies, ensuring that their principal cities received provisions, regulating labor practices in those cities, and combating piracy on the seas.

> drink it, be they great or mean. They sit in order, and it is brought to them very hot, in porcelain cups holding four or five ounces each. Every man takes his own in his hand, cooling and sipping it. It is black and rather tasteless; and, although some good qualities are ascribed to it, none are proven. Only their custom induces them to meet here for conversation and use this for entertainment; and in order to attract customers there are here pretty boys richly dressed, who serve the coffee and take the money; with music and other diversions. These places are chiefly frequented at night in summer, and by day in winter. . . . There are others like it in the city, and many more throughout Turkey and Persia.

Teixeira was not the only European fascinated by coffee. When coffee first arrived in Europe, it caused a sensation. Little wonder: unlike the skeptical Teixeira, most Europeans believed coffee to have the power of an aphrodisiac. In 1732–1734, the composer Johann Sebastian Bach documented the sensation caused by coffee, as well as its purported aphrodisiac powers, in his "Coffee Cantata." In the cantata, a father confronts his daughter as follows:

> *You wicked child, you disobedient girl,*
> *oh!, when will I get my way;*
> *give up coffee!*

To which she replies,

> *Father, don't be so severe!*
> *If I can't drink*
> *my bowl of coffee three times daily,*
> *then in my torment I will shrivel up*
> *like a piece of roast goat.*

After the father promises his daughter to find her a husband if only she would give up coffee, she sings,

> *If it could only happen soon*
> *that at last, before I go to bed,*
> *instead of coffee*
> *I were to get a proper lover!*

(In the end, the ungrateful little vixen gets both a husband and her coffee.)

In addition, because of their central location, the Ottoman and Safavid empires controlled and profited from most of the spice trade between the East Indies and Europe. They also controlled much of the trade in luxury items such as silk. During the seventeenth century, two-thirds of Persian silk went to Europe. When the Portuguese attempted to horn in on the profitable Indian Ocean trade by establishing themselves in Aden (in contemporary Yemen) in 1513, the Ottomans swatted them away a quarter century later. While the world of uncontestable European military supremacy might have been looming on the horizon, it had not yet arrived.

Vignette

Slaves, Opium, and the Course of World Trade

The modern world economy began to take shape in the early sixteenth century. Although Spain had access to New World gold and silver, Britain, France, and the Netherlands were soon able to surpass their rival in terms of economic power. And over the course of the next two centuries Britain would eclipse its rivals as well. Along with the institutional changes discussed in this chapter, the ability of the British to dominate international trafficking in a few choice commodities propelled their ascent to the heights of economic power. Among these commodities were slaves and opium.

In 1532, the first boatload of enslaved Africans landed in the New World. This event marks the inauguration of the so-called triangle trade. British merchants, carrying guns, ammunition, and manufactured goods to Africa, traded those goods for slaves, whom they then transported to the Caribbean and North America via the infamous "middle passage." There they sold those slaves and with the proceeds bought sugar, tobacco, and cotton. The triangle trade generated huge profits for British banking houses (and British and North American merchants), enabling Britain to surpass its economic competitors. Britain continued to reap the surpluses from this trade until 1807—the year the British government (and the United States Constitution) declared the slave trade illegal. By that time, a new system for the circulation of commodities and capital was emerging.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the British East India Company began selling opium grown in India to China. The company did this to pay for its administrative apparatus in India and to offset its substantial trade imbalance with China. After all, the British had an unslakable thirst for Chinese tea and a boundless appetite for silk and *chinoiserie*, while the "Celestial Empire" had little use for the products of Britain. Not surprisingly, the Chinese government resisted

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a definite shift in the balance of power between Europe and the Ottoman and Safavid empires. This came about in the wake of the Commercial Revolution in Europe, which had begun in the sixteenth century.

As mentioned earlier, there were many aspects to this revolution, some of which spawned it, others that were spawned by it and further encouraged its progress. The Commercial Revolution was a period in which Europeans invented and applied new technologies of direct benefit to trade. Alongside these technological breakthroughs were breakthroughs in finance and the organization of trade—joint stock companies, insurance, banking—which allowed participants to increase their profits and spread risk among investors. Technological and institutional breakthroughs enabled Europeans not only to embark on voyages of discovery but to exploit them to the fullest. In 1497, Vasco da Gama discovered the Cape Route, which allowed Europeans to reach India and the Spice Islands (present-day Indonesia) by heading south around Africa's Cape of Good Hope, that is, entirely by sea. This enabled European merchants to bypass the Ottoman

the British attempt to balance accounts by turning China into one large opium den. Twice during the nineteenth century Britain went to war with China—the "Opium Wars" of 1839–1842 and 1856–1860—to open up the Chinese market to their noxious export and to keep it open. As a result of the wars, the Chinese were forced to accept opium from India and make a number of their ports available for "free trade."

Like the triangle trade system, the India-China trade system that emerged in the wake of the opium wars provided a foundation on which the worldwide circulation of commodities and capital during the mid-to-late Victorian era would rest. According to economic historian A. J. H. Latham,

> The sale of Bengal opium to China was a great link in the chain of commerce with which Britain had surrounded the world. The chain worked like this: The United Kingdom paid the United States for cotton by bills upon the Bank of England. The Americans took some of those bills to Canton and swapped them for tea. The Chinese exchanged the bills for Indian opium. Some of the bills were remitted to England as profit; others were taken to India to buy additional commodities, as well as to furnish the money remittance of private fortunes in India and the funds for carrying on the Indian government at home.

Besides supporting the global economic environment that the nineteenth-century Middle East economy inhabited, the Victorian-era system for the circulation of commodities and capital affected the region in other ways as well. For example, both the Ottoman Empire and Persia piggybacked onto the international trade in opium. Soon after the opium wars, the Ottoman Empire became one of the three largest producers of opium in the world (the other two being China and India), and as a result of the availability of opium in Persia, the ranks of drug smokers swelled as never before.

and Safavid empires and monopolize long-distance trade. As a result, the Ottoman and Safavid governments lost vital customs revenues, and merchants from those empires lost access to the spice trade to their European competitors.

About two decades after Vasco da Gama's discovery, the Spanish conquered Mexico and Peru, flooding Eurasia with tons of precious metals. Over time, all of Eurasia broke up into different economic zones in which prices varied widely. Where the precious metals had hit, prices were high; where they had not, prices remained at their usual levels. The division of Eurasia into different economic zones opened up new possibilities for trade. It also affected the social organization of the various zones differently. For example, because the price of grain was initially higher in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe, Eastern European nobles could increase their wealth by expanding their production of grain and selling that grain in the west. Eastern European nobles thus did everything they could to extend their control over land and the peasantry, including reducing peasants to mere property. The result was what historians of Eastern Europe call the "second serfdom."

The Commercial Revolution was encouraged further by the rise of new political units in Europe. One such unit was a variation on an old theme: the merchant republic. Merchant republics had emerged in the Mediterranean region centuries before the Commercial Revolution. City-states like Venice and Genoa were highly efficient because merchants and bankers, not feudal landlords, controlled the institutions of state. Being at the helm of state, merchants and bankers ensured that the republic's foreign policy would coincide with its trade policy. By the seventeenth century, after the discovery of the Americas had shifted the center of gravity of world trade westward and the importance of the newly emergent Atlantic economy had surpassed the importance of the Mediterranean economy, Britain, France, and the Netherlands eclipsed their Mediterranean rivals.

These states possessed two attributes that other European states would seek to emulate. First, like the Mediterranean merchant republics, they possessed a strong central government that could maintain domestic order, guarantee commercial credit, and direct a national trade policy. Britain, France, and the Netherlands adopted the doctrine of mercantilism as their trade policy. Mercantilists believed that the more gold a state accumulated, the stronger it would be, and that if states encouraged trade, exported more than they imported, and protected their home industries, they would be able to accumulate more gold. Second, unlike their predecessors, Britain, France, and the Netherlands possessed an integrated internal market that united town and countryside. This ensured the state access to the resources necessary to maintain a high level of economic activity and protect its interests abroad.

In all, beginning in the seventeenth century, Britain, France, and the Netherlands were able to dominate and transform the world economic system. Why these states rose to dominance and not others is not entirely clear. Nor is it clear why this process would have taken place at all. Perhaps it was because these states were better able to take advantage of the possibilities opened up by the Atlantic economy. Perhaps it had to do with the peculiar nature of that northwestern peninsula of the Eurasian continent where these states were located. On the one hand, Europe was small enough to allow for the rapid diffusion of the technologies and institutional breakthroughs associated with the Commercial Revolution. On the other hand, it was competitive enough to force states that wished to survive to explore new means of applying those technologies and institutional breakthroughs. Suffice it to say, there were European winners and losers (whatever happened to Spain, much less Venice and Genoa?), and the transformation of the world economy that the winners induced was hardly inevitable.

It was therefore not that the Ottoman and Safavid empires were necessarily doing something wrong that allowed for the emergence of the modern world system with its Western European core. Indeed, these empires did everything that one would have expected them to have done to deal with the crisis of the seventeenth century.

Strapped for cash, the Ottoman and Safavid empires curtailed the *timar/tiyul* systems and increasingly depended on tax farming to make up shortfalls in

revenues. As we have seen, this may have resulted in the long-term alienation of resources from the imperial governments. Both governments sold offices in the bureaucracy and even the military to the highest bidder. The Ottoman government allowed members of the elite janissary corps to take jobs and raise families in places where they deployed, thereby decreasing their incentive to fight wars on the fringes of the empire. Both governments increased taxation, further alienating the peasants whose surplus provided revenue for the state. Both governments debased their currencies, and, when this did not resolve their economic woes, debased them again. In all, the Ottomans and the Safavids worked within the parameters of a system that had become out of date.

Ultimately, the world system integrated both the Ottoman Empire and Persia as periphery. Integration and peripheralization would have a profound effect on the future of the region. Farmers who had once tilled their lands for subsistence turned them over to the cultivation of cash crops like cotton, opium, and tobacco. By 1880, 20 percent of Persia's exports consisted of opium; on the eve of World War I, cotton comprised 80 percent of Egyptian exports. To facilitate these exports, European and local governments financed and built railroads and expanded ports to handle steamships, in the process changing the face of the region.

Throughout the Middle East, a market economy, in which people produced commodities for sale, came to replace local marketplace economies, in which people produced mainly for their own consumption and used whatever surplus they had to buy those items they could not produce themselves. Land itself became a commodity like any other to be bought and sold, once independent peasants became wage laborers on other peoples' estates, and tribal leaders became landlords while fellow tribespeople worked their lands as tenant laborers. In sum, Europe cultivated a colonial-style trade with Middle Eastern empires, and this relationship affected not only economic relations in the region, but social relations as well.

CHAPTER 4

War, Diplomacy, and the New Global Balance of Power

The last of the three sixteenth-century events that defined the modern world was the Protestant Reformation. From 1517 (the year of Martin Luther's public denunciation of church doctrines and practices) through 1648 (the end of the Thirty Years' War), Europeans engaged in numerous conflicts pitting Catholics against Protestants. The Protestant Reformation drew the final curtain on the dream of a universal Christian empire in Europe.

The Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years' War recognized fixed territorial boundaries among the states of Europe and established the principle that the religion of a state's ruler would be the religion of the state. The right of rulers to decide affairs within their boundaries would henceforth be inviolable—at least in theory. Europe was now permanently divided into a number of highly competitive sovereign states that sought to defend themselves against each other, gain advantage over their adversaries, and, at times, establish a balance among themselves. In effect, both the modern state and the international political order assembled from those states collectively—the modern state system—might arguably have their roots in the Protestant Reformation. We shall discuss the spread of the modern state system to the Middle East in a later chapter. First, however, it is necessary to see how the emergence of modern states in Europe affected the region in other ways.

The Middle East was one of the places where the competition among European states played itself out. In the eastern Mediterranean, statesmen called this competition the "Eastern Question." At first, the Eastern Question involved Britain and France. Over the course of the nineteenth century, it came to include Britain, France, and Russia, and then, finally, Britain, France, Russia, and Germany. On the northern frontier of Persia, a related competition pit Great Britain against Russia—the so-called "Great Game," a term popularized by the British writer Rudyard Kipling in his novel *Kim*. Both competitions are the subject of this chapter.

Let us begin by looking at how the Eastern Question evolved. From its founding in the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire played a role in the European balance of power. The sixteenth century was the glorious era of Ottoman expansion.